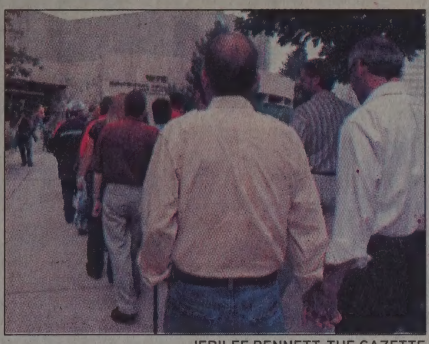

GETTING IN LINE: Same-sex couples file into the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder's Office to apply for marriage licenses Friday afternoon. The couples were turned down.

JERILEE BENNETT, THE GAZETTE

GROUP: Man, woman receive license but don't intend to use it

FROM PAGE 1

Swanstrom said.

Equal rights for gay and lesbian couples was a common goal for those at Friday's event.

"We work. We pay our taxes. We vote," said Valerie Wheeler of Colorado Springs.

"We're hard-working Americans. We just want the opportunity to share our lives together as a married couple," said her partner, Elaine Diehl.

The symbolic protest came two days after the U.S. Senate rejected a constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage.

Massachusetts is the only state where gay and lesbian couples can obtain marriage licenses.

After being turned down by Colorado, the couples went outside and were issued "Civil Union/Marriage License to Love" certificates by the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center.

One couple, however, walked out with an official Colorado marriage license.

That couple was the Rev. Nori Rost of Pikes Peak Metropolitan Community Church and Ryan Acker, gay and lesbian center director.

"We have never known an intimate moment, but we got a marriage license because he's a man and I'm a woman," said Rost, who will officiate at Sunday's Pridefest nuptials.

"Couples who have been together 5, 12, 18, 20, 25 years cannot get this piece of paper because they have the same gender," she said. "They can share a life together, raise children together, go through cancer together, have hopes and dreams together, but cannot get married.

"Yet Ryan Acker and I, who don't really even know each other, can walk in, pay $10 and get a marriage license."

In this case, it was symbolic. Rost and Acker don't plan to tie the knot.

CONTACT THE WRITER: 636-0253 or abrown@gazette.com

PRIDEFEST

Pridefest activities include:

TODAY

4-6 p.m.: Ice cream social with free ice cream, Pride Center, 716-B N. Tejon St.

10:30 p.m.: Gay pride pageant, Hide N' Seek, 512 W. Colorado Ave.

SUNDAY

8 a.m.: Community breakfast, Hide N' Seek.

9-10:30 a.m.: Metropolitan Community Church service and celebration.

10:30-11:30 a.m.: Mass same-sex wedding, Acacia Park.

11:30 a.m-noon: Parade lineup, Tejon and Cache La Poudre streets.

Noon-1 p.m.: Pridefest parade.

1-6 p.m.: Beer garden, children's activities, live music and entertainment, Acacia Park.

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VIEW

I KNOW THESE TREES ARE LOVED, BUT THEY'RE DISEASED! WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE OUT ABOUT 200 TO PROTECT THE OTHER TREES!
RATS! I DON'T SUPPOSE CLINTON'S ROADLESS POLICY WILL PROTECT THESE EITHER!
I SUGGEST WE JUST LEAVE IT ON THE BACKS OF THE TAXPAYERS WHERE IT BELONGS!
I THINK I CAN! I THINK I CAN...
TOM ASAY@GAZETTE.COM

CHUCK ASAY, THE GAZETTE

h care costs
rs toward reform

Frist also talked bout the "inefficien-y" of the system, not-g that "according to recent Rand study, atients received rec-mmended care about nly half the time for onditions such as my wn specialty of heart isease, as well as dia-etes."

But there is worse, e said: An estimated 3,000 people die each errors. Death rates are twice as high for as for whites.Hospi-vest 50 percent less a

committee last month and said exactly what Frist said: "The main point I want to leave with you," Simmons said, "is that the crisis we face cannot be resolved by our present strategies or with the patchwork efforts of the past. Neither can it be resolved by dealing with only one or several of the problems we face. Resolution will require comprehensive health system reform."

That means dealing simultaneously with the problems of the uninsured, of cost controls, of uneven quality and of lagging technology. It will require government action, in cooperation with business, the medical establishment and patients themselves. It will be expensive, but private economists and government budget experts testify that

Gay couples try, can't get licenses

Partners line up to make symbolic protest

JERILEE BENNETT, THE GAZETTE

REJECTED: El Paso County Deputy Clerk Lynda Rosenwinkel turns down Rod Fleming, left, and John Hild's request for a marriage license Friday. The couple have been together 18 years.

By **ANDREA BROWN**
THE GAZETTE

Like many prospective grooms, Justin Swanstrom had some jitters before the trip to get his marriage license Friday.

"I was nervous," the 48-year-old Denver attorney said.

The fear wasn't of matrimony but of public reaction to a group of same-sex couples trying to legalize their unions.

"It was not knowing what it was going to be like today," he said. "We expected protesters."

Instead, he was met by about 60 supporters of same-sex marriages at a peaceful gathering in Centennial Hall.

Swanstrom and partner Tim Johnson, 47, were among 20 same-sex couples who formed a line to apply for marriage licenses at the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder's Office in preparation for Sunday's Pridefest mass wedding ceremony in Acacia Park.

One by one, as expected, each couple was turned down at the license counter.

"I'm not authorized to issue a marriage license. According to the laws of Colorado, it is just between a man and a woman, and I'll be more than glad to give you the statute stating that," Deputy Clerk Lynda Rosenwinkel told Swanstrom and Johnson.

The men thanked her, although the form wasn't the piece of paper they wanted.

"Straight people get the whole bundle of rights that go with marriage,"

SEE **GROUP** • PAGE 7

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this process."

The states most affected by Friday's announcement are Minnesota, which has the largest wolf population in the lower 48 states at around 2,400, Wisconsin with more than 370 and Michigan with an estimated 360. Those states will take over management of their own wolf populations, with federal oversight for five years.

The Interior Department upgraded the gray wolf's status from endangered to threatened everywhere in the lower 48 states last year except for the Southwest, where a subspecies, the Mexican gray wolf, still is struggling.

While gray wolves have been making a comeback in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho since they were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park in the mid-1990s, the federal agency has not been able to agree with those states on management plans.

The wolf will remain classified as threatened in the West and endangered in the South-